1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

The Village Headman

622 The village headman (*Sekulu yimbo*) is in a very real sense the father of the villagers. Considering their relationship to him as shown by the survey of Ngendo, it is no surprise to find that to nearly all of the householders the headman is quite literally either 'father' (*tate*) or 'elder brother' (*kota*). The headman is literally the patriarch. He is also therefore the village priest. His com-
[769] pound is the only one in the village which has a spirit hut (*etambo*). In this hut the elder prays to ancestral spirits and holds communion (*oku felevela*) with them. In case of need, he may spend an entire night or more so occupied, but he will often offer a prayer when he awakens during the night. This hut is also used as a store-room for possessions not used every day and here are kept the insignia of office. The elder may sleep in this hut at any time when he is not sleeping with one of his wives, and here also he may lodge respected guests.

622 The headman functions as a Justice of the Peace for the village.
692 The graver and more difficult cases are heard before the whole village on the dance-floor, while the simpler ones which require the attendance only of those concerned, together with their respective elders, are taken up either in the *onjango* or in the headman's own courtyard. Through all and in spite of all political and administrative changes, the village court of justice continues and will continue to function.

622 It is evident from the above that a headman may have much or
554 little to do in attending to the affairs of his village, depending on several factors, such as the number of the villagers, their attitudes and disposition toward each other, relations with neighbouring villages, the demands made upon the village by the authorities, &c. However numerous may be his 'official duties', he will still find some time to attend to his own affairs, whether he be a farmer, a hunter, or a trader. In former times and before he became village headman, Sikilili was a trader and caravan leader (*ofumbelo*, Portuguese: *pombeiro*), and made many trips to the regions of Ngangela. As a headman he returned to farming and although he seemed to be quite old at the time of my visits, he had a creditable little plot of tobacco. It may be of interest to note that only the headman may speak of the village as 'my village' (*imbo kange*). The heads of the little wards may speak thus possessively only of

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advancement, will go to the head of their olusia to ask for his intercession with the spirits.(1)

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As legal head of the village, the *sekulu yimbo* presides over both the more serious cases, which are held before the whole village on the dance-floor, and the simpler ones, which require the attendance only of those concerned, together with their respective elders, and may be taken up either in the *onjango* or in the headman's own courtyard. Heably seems to suggest that all the section-heads act with the village headman as a kind of council, but does not give details. He states also that the *olosekulu* (sing. *sekulu*) of the village formerly had charge of trials for murder, theft, adultery, and arguments over land,(2) and points out that they were more active in the legal system than the chiefs.(3) This is even more true today, when the village court of justice continues to function in spite of political and administrative changes, although the offices of chiefs and to some extent of sub-chiefs have largely decayed.

[m]

622 623 651 466 [463]

Other functions of the village headman include: the distribution of land to the various families when new village sites are opened;(4) the direction of the communal fire-hunts;(5) and, today, the collecting of taxes from the villagers and the direction and organisation of labour to work on the roads.(6) But however numerous the headman's official duties, he usually finds some time to attend to his own affairs, whether he is a farmer, hunter, or trader.(7)

622 643

Succession to headmanship is usually from father to son or from elder to younger brother, "with only as much recognition of primogeniture as belongs to the general ... hierarchy of age."(8) Succession is, however, affected by the "democratic" tendencies in succession to chieftainship.(9)

The Chief (ocema or sova)(10)

631 643 [77]

The Ovimbundu are grouped in 22 chiefdoms, of which half were in the past generally tributary to the more powerful chiefs.(11) At the same time each chiefdom had its separate government and could be considered as a unit in itself. Effective European occupation and direct rule have atrophied the chiefly office among the Ovimbundu, until today chiefs survive as little more than "living museum pieces".(12) Childs(13) enumerates the functions of the chiefly office as follows:

643 713 769

(a) *Religious.* The chief's ancestral spirits were the principal chiefdom deities, and the king was high-priest as well as the visible "vice-regent and incarnation" of the spirits.

(1) Childs, personal communication.
(2) The maternal uncle is responsible for settling disputes over property which occur within the olusia. (Heably *op.cit.*, p.390).
(3) Ibid. (4) Ibid.
(5) Cardoso, *op.cit.*, p.115. (6) Ibid., p.121.
(7) Childs, *op.cit.*, p.36. (8) Ibid., p.44.
(9) Ibid.
(10) *Ocema* means *chief* or *king*. *Sova* is the personalized form used with the name. This the Portuguese writers have corrupted into *ossoma* or *soba*. (Childs, personal communication)
(11) See above, p.2.
(12) Childs, *op.cit.*, p.39. (13) Ibid.

regent and incarnation" of the spirits. Sacrifices were made at the royal shrine or *kakoloto* ("at the skulls"), where the skulls of past chiefs were kept, in order to:-

(i) control the elements i.e. to ensure a sufficient supply of rain and avoid the dangers caused by storm; also to control fire by providing a new fire ceremonially kindled[1] from which everyone took his fire.

(ii) to ensure fertility, towards which the royal marriage had great influence. The queen's special province was agriculture and her kitchen was sanctified by human sacrifice to guarantee the national food supply. Ceremonially treated seed was distributed to be mixed with the seed of each granary.

(b) *To represent the country in its external relations*, principally to make trade agreements with other chiefs, or to make war on other peoples in order to get tribute and plunder. The war leader *(Kasonge)* has his own residence entirely separate from that of the king, whom he must not meet face to face except on certain ceremonial occasions.[2] Each king must inaugurate his reign with a war, during which or after which he must ceremonially "eat the old one" *(oku lia ekonge)* - who was usually a specially fattened slave cooked with the flesh of the principal animals commonly eaten.[3]

(c) *To dispense justice.* The chief's court or *olusenje* was the supreme court of the chiefdom. The chief had the final word in any case, but most chiefs acted according to custom.

(d) *To protect himself and the chiefdom*, the chief could use "magic" (?) which might have been accounted witchcraft or murder if practised without authority: e.g. the ritual murder of a pregnant woman, or of the children whose lives were required for building and furnishing the queen's kitchen.

(e) The chief made much use of divination in order to carry out his office. For this purpose he had his own diviner *(citue cocoma)*, who was of the blood royal; but he also consulted diviners of other regions and types.

Succession to chiefship is in the male line,[4] from father to son, elder brother to younger brother or brother's son, or sometimes to one more distantly related. The election is made by the councillors whose duty it is (?), ordinarily before the old chief's death is announced. These same councillors may depose an unpopular chief, and there have been many such depositions. This "democratic" tendency of the Ovimbundu has been noted by most writers. Childs points out that it is attested by the fact that a chief (formerly as well as today) works in his own fields, and by folk-tales which give incidental and intimate pictures of petty details in the lives of the chiefs.

(1) See above, p.26.
(2) In Bailundu he, with certain other officials, was of the stock of slaves of the state *(ovindili viocoso)*.
(3) Childs, p.21. Many early writers refer to the cannibalism of the "Jaggas" or "Imbangalas" who are thought to have been the Ovimbundu chiefs. (See above, p.6, and also Lacerda and Baverstein, quoted by Childs, pp.177f.)
(4) But inheritance is said to follow a different line among chiefs from among commoners; possibly inheritance is also in the paternal line. See Childs p.18.

+ See footnote 1, p. 31

A man slave might become a blacksmith or a hunter, although his work was always for his master. He was also required to fight for his master in case of war.(1)

RELIGION AND MAGIC

Information on Umbundu religion and magic is very slight, being practically confined to a few items collected by Hambly from his Umbundu interpreter,(2) and a more coherent article by Tucker, primarily on divination.(3)

THE SUPREME BEING

Suku, the Supreme Being, is thought of as the creator of mountains, rivers, sky and human beings.(4) His attributes have not been described.

CONCEPTS OF SPIRIT(5)

The body *(etimbo)* is thought of as having *ouenyo* (breath or life), and containing the *ocililemba* (spirit or soul). The *ocililemba* is visible in a person's shadow in the daytime, and during sleep it has adventures of its own, which it reports to the sleeper through dreams *(olonjoi)*. At death it leaves the body, but lingers nearby, accompanying the body to the interment, still in the form of a shadow. It then becomes an *ocilulu* (ghost), and may wander where it pleases. Sometimes it may be seen passing with superhuman swiftness through the village, uttering weird cries or calling pigs or chickens as the person used to do while alive. It chooses one of the households as a home, and indicates its wish to stay there by causing illness among the householders. The victim when he has learned the cause of his illness from the diviner places himself in a favourable condition to receive the spirit by performing a ceremony which includes going into a trance.(6) When this ceremony has been performed the *ocilulu* (ghost) becomes an *ondele*, which appears to be a generic name for ancestral (and other?) spirits. It is not clear from Tucker's description whether the relatives of the deceased always wait for this intimation of the wish of the *ocilulu* for a home, or whether the ceremonies may sometimes be performed immediately after death. Nor does she give any information regarding the relatives with whom the *ocilulu* usually chooses to live. She states that spirits of paternal ancestors are less feared than those of maternal ancestors, for while the former are usually satisfied with a hunt, a beer-drinking and a feast held in their honour, the latter are malignant and may "eat" children and occasionally adults also.

The *ohamba* (sing. *ehamba*) "are the peaceful spirits of ancestors of long ago, who have already had the trance ceremony performed for them, and thus have a home and ... standing in the other world". (Tucker does not indicate how much time must pass before a spirit becomes a *ohamba*.(7))

(1) Hambly, 1934, p.256. (2) Op.cit., chap.IX.
(3) 1940. (4) Hambly, op.cit., p.262.
(5) Based on Tucker, op.cit. unless otherwise stated.
(6) Tucker does not describe this ritual.
(7) It may be noted that among the Nyanglo peoples to the east, the *mahamba* are the forms taken by ancestral spirits whom they wish to harass their descendants. See McCulloch 1951, p.75.

769 They intimate their wishes to their descendants only through slight illness, usually asking for honour to be paid to them by a feast, or by some descendant carrying on their profession.

Osande is the spirit of the much-honoured founder of the family,(1) and is always beneficent, bringing good fortune and warning his descendants of danger. Hambly and Tucker agree that *Ekisi* is the same kind of 776 spirit as *Osande* (although Hambly does not give *Osande* this special meaning). Tucker writes that *Ekisi* is a benevolent spirit who calls the vil- 769 lagers together at night, and gives them advice through a medium (?), whom he enters without the latter's going into the usual trance. *Kandundu* according to Tucker is an *ekisi* who holds the leading position among the [778] ancestral spirits owing to his seniority. Hambly describes a shrine to *Kandundu* at Bailundu; anyone who sees the contents of the shrine is supposed to become blind. He writes that *Kandundu* is thought of as "the spirit of dreaming who makes swellings on the body", but gives no further explanation. According to Tucker *Kandundu* is an especially powerful *ondele*, and ceremonies performed for him have many distinctive features.

224 *Huvi*, the spirit of the hunt, has his own shrine and priest in the village of the (paramount?) chief. His hut is very large, since all the 776 meat of the hunts is placed in it. In front of it dances are held, and 778 poles are decorated with skulls and other trophies of hunting. Before the door there is a carved figure of *Samaba*, the spirit who chases the game towards the hunter. A man whose ritual name is *Kapila*, and a woman called *Kuanja*(2) are in charge of the spirit-hut of *Huvi*, and make supplication to him for success in hunting. Hunters living elsewhere but in [553] an *onbala* or head village do not have persons bearing these ritual names, but their dogs are often called *Huvi*, *Samaba*, *Kapila* or *Kuanja*.

775 The most dreaded spirits are the *otulopokopoko*, who may be spirits 754 of still-born babies or foetuses, mental defectives, maltreated slaves, or persons, especially children, killed by sorcery. When a person has been found guilty of killing a child by sorcery or witchcraft, he is sentenced to "restore life" to it, which he does by substituting for it a child from his own family: if the deceased child is a girl, he must give an ox as well. The child is treated with great respect by his new family. If however the parents do not ask the sorcerer or witch for restitution, the child becomes an *okulupokopoko*, and may return to "eat" other children, at the command of the sorcerer who has killed it.

RITUAL

793 It has been noted that the village headman acts as priest for the 613 *olusa*, the group of paternally-related persons who form the basis of the village group, while the head of the *olusa* acts as priest for his dispersed, maternally-related group.(3) There is little detailed information on the religious duties of these priests. Cushman(4) describes the village headman as making public prayers each morning to Suku. Childs however points out(5) that it is more usual for the headman to spend a

(1) i.e. of either the *olusa* or the *olusa*. (Childs, personal communication)
(2) According to Childs, (1949, p.21) *Kuanja* is a hunting goddess.
(3) See above, p.29.
(4) 1946, p.51. (5) Personal communication.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

The foregoing facts, when compared with field work among the Ovimbundu, indicate that the old culture of the Congo and northern Angola bears a strong resemblance to Umbundu culture at the present day. A more detailed analysis of this resemblance is made in chapter X.

The following notes dealing with exploration in Angola (1800–1930) are adduced for critical comparison with my own observations among the Ovimbundu.

The work of Sir R. F. Burton describing the exploration of Lacerda and other Portuguese pioneers, is more useful for geographical than for ethnological information. Lacerda's journey to Czambe, south of Lake Moero, was performed in 1798. A mention of veneration for the dead and consultation of the deceased on all occasions of war or of good fortune, is made (p. 127). These are important points in the present tribal life of the Ovimbundu.

Bowditch (1824) writes from information given to him by Almeida and Saldanha. There are valuable references to the Vacilenge, a people adjacent to the Ovimbundu, who refused to kill their cattle, "rather than do which they will endure famine to extremity." This note was made about Long. 15° E. and Lat. 15° S. (p. 34). The cattle were milked, and cattle-raiding by the Ovimbundu was common at this time. Many present-day Ovimbundu do not milk their cattle, but the Vacilenge still follow their milking custom observed before 1824.

Livingstone's journey through northeast and northern Angola in 1853 contains references to the Vachokue who seemed bent on plunder (I, p. 370). Livingstone noted cotton spinning, which I recorded as an occupation of males of the Ovimbundu at Elende. Livingstone, like other early travelers, encountered caravans of Bihéans (Ovimbundu) bearing elephants' tusks and beeswax, commodities, which, along with slaves, formed the chief merchandise of these caravans from the Benguela Highlands (p. 466). Livingstone notes and sketches (Plate XIII, Fig. 10) the double-handled hoe (p. 442) which is still used.

J. J. Monteiro (I, p. 61) saw the poison ordeal administered. The poison itself was prepared from the thick hard bark of a large tree (*Erythrophlaeum guineense*). The place of observation was Mongue Grande, just south of the Congo estuary, and again Monteiro was present when the poison cup was given to two women at Ambriette. Of this ordeal there is more to be said when discussing the culture contacts of the Ovimbundu, because the ordeal is a basic factor of

535 Almost every evening one may hear the tapping of drums an the songs of dancers, because in addition to dances for a funeral o other special occasion there are ordinary dances of amusement i which lines of men and women advance and retreat, or men an women circle round the drums making arm movements accom panied by a swaying rhythm.

[243] The dance *onyaco*, performed in June when the corn is ripe, ma have an ancient history and special significance as part of an agri cultural rite. When corn is being stored the people sing, "There i grain in the house, may it never be out." There is no dance i [226] connection with fishing.

229 There is mimicry of animals in the hunting game played by boy The frog, the leopard, and other animals are imitated in certai games, but I have no evidence of the performance of mimetic dance in relation to any cult for increasing the supply of animal life.

535 The use of the small ball *ombunje* illustrates the way in whic [534] an apparent toy can be used in rites of a religious kind. *Ombunj* consists of a hard spherical fruit about six centimeters in diameter in which several hard seeds rattle. The sphere is covered with layer of cloth over which lizard skin is stretched and sewn.

[769] When the people wish to commemorate the death of a king, o [789] when the king is sick, the medicine-man (*ocimbanda*) says that ther must be *ceaka* dancing. A strong man dances for many hours whil holding this little ball in his outstretched hand. Other men who ar dancing use their fists to hit the muscles of the outstretched arm i an attempt to make the holder drop the ball (*ombunje*). If he doe so another man will promptly take hold of it. The precise nature o the endurance test is unexplained, but there is possibly the idea o giving strength to a sick king by this tension and endurance. My interpreter thought this was so, but could not explain why the danc should be performed to commemorate the death of a king. It would seem natural, however, to transfer the *ombunje* rite to a commemora tive festival, if in the first place it was part of the last rites of dying king.

534 There are among the Ovimbundu specialists in dancing, singing 463 and the playing of musical instruments. *Onjimbi* is the word fo a singer of merit who starts the choruses. *Ocili* is a dancer of mor than ordinary skill. When a man is required to play a drum or othe instrument I have noticed that it is thought necessary to bring specialist. There is no doubt that drumming requires special aptitud and practice. The man who plays the long drum is *usiki*, the drum

MEDICINE-MEN

756 766 When a medicine-man dies the people call in another medicine-man to take charge of the ceremonies. The corpse is tied in a sitting posture, which is the attitude for burial. His charms are attached to his body and in this position they remain in the grave. The head ornament *osala*, which may be feathers, quills of the porcupine, or hair from a goat's beard, is placed upright on the head and fastened by a band under the chin (Plate XXIII, Fig. 2). The corpse is kept in a seated position lashed to a stool for three days. There is no coffin.

The corpse is carried in the posture described to the grave which is dug at a cross-path. The corpse of a medicine-man is questioned in the same manner as that employed in interrogating the corpse of a commoner. When the corpse is placed in its grave the medicine-men, some of them from a distance, dance because they have "spirit in their heads." The medicine-men shake their heads while dancing, and without pausing each eats a living chicken that he carries in his hand. At the side of the grave, a dog, a chicken, and a goat are killed. No part of the flesh is buried; it is consumed by those present at the funeral.

A sleeping mat is placed in the grave, and on the mound of earth are placed horns filled with medicine, and skins which used to hang from the waist of the medicine-man when he was performing. The rain-making charms are not buried in the grave, because their interment would cause the rainfall to diminish; the charms may, however, be placed on the outside of the grave. No food is placed in or on the grave. The mound of earth is painted with a human male figure. When a new medicine-man is making medicine or performing ceremonies he uses the name of a deceased medicine-man.

756 It is thought that the dead medicine-man has spirits which he is able to send to earth. No images of the medicine-man are made. Medicine-men visit the grave at night in order to take parts of the corpse to include in their medicine. At Caconda in western Angola I obtained the outfit of a medicine-man who included in his equipment two small hoe blades which he used for disinterring the dead. There was a portion of human tibia in the basket and a round stone pounder for pulverizing bone along with other ingredients.

[768] The funeral rites of a medicine-woman are the same as those of a medicine-man except that medicine-women carry the corpse. An *ocoma* ("king") or a *sekulu* ("chief") will visit the grave of a medicine-man to ask for rain or other favors.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

KINGS AND CHIEFS

A chief (village headman) is buried in a specially constructed enclosure in the village over which he ruled (Plate XLV, Fig. 2). The mausoleum is a small hut with a substantial wooden door which is surrounded by a strongly built wooden fence ten feet high.

I was taken inside a tomb in the capital of Ngalangi, where the king showed the interior of his burial place of kings. There were four mounds of earth, each of which covered the body of a king, and a little distance away were the graves of the principal wives. The hut contained pottery and gourds; also a small fire, which is replenished by an attendant who must not allow it to be extinguished.

Ngonga says that the burial chamber at Elende contains the head of the chief in a box. After one year from the time of burial the box containing the head is opened in order that a libation of beer may be poured over it. Sometimes the head is anointed with palm oil and a new band of cloth is added. These attentions are paid to the head in time of sickness and drought. If the head shows signs of desiccation an ox is killed in order to provide a new piece of skin in which the head is sewn. The tomb is visited by men who come to ask for good fortune when they are departing for a journey to the interior, and these supplicants are led to the tomb by the ruling chief. Near the burial place of the *sekulu* ("village headman") at Elende there was the house of bows (Plate XLVI, Fig. 1), which is typical of several seen in different parts of Angola. These repositories always contain staffs, bows, arrows, sleeping mats, and possibly other articles which belonged to the dead.

The corpse of a king is suspended from the top of the burial hut by a rope which is tightly fastened round his neck. That the king has died is not admitted and the announcement states that "the king has a cold in his head." The head of a specially selected family twists the rope until the head is severed. The twisting is carried out gradually, a little each day, so that a week or more is required for severance. In former times the head was detached by twisting only, but at present a knife is used to hasten the friction of the rope. When the body of the king has fallen into the basket placed underneath to receive it, the people may say that the king is dead and mourning begins.

Judging by the arrangement seen at the *ombala* of Ngalangi the bodies are buried in a hut constructed as a burial place for kings, but Ngonga states that the older method was cave burial. The body

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

766 643 of a dead king would in former times be taken at night by chiefs and interred in one of the caves which are numerous in the rugged hills of the Benguela Highlands. The burial posture for a king is the same as that described for a medicine-man. The severed head is eventually kept in a box, but primarily both head and body are buried, though in separate places. At the end of a year the head is dug up and transferred to its casket.

765 643 Mourning for a king lasts for seven days, during which his children and wives wear strips of oxhide on their left wrists. The village chiefs gather to choose a king from the "blood of kings," though "sometimes a bad man will make himself king without waiting to be chosen." The choice should be in favor of the oldest son of the chief wife, "but if she has stupid sons, a son of another wife of the king will be chosen."

769 643 Sometimes during drought chiefs and their wives go to the grave of a chief where they say, "If you are angry tell us what you want. If you want an ox we will kill one." If they visit the tomb of a king, the king's corpse is asked, "Do you want a new box for your head? We will make one." The oldest chief takes from the tomb the box which contains the head. This is slung on a pole supported on the shoulders of two boys. The head is then questioned in the way described for the funeral of a commoner. The oldest chief offers a sacrifice, if such procedure is demanded by a forward swing of the pole which supports the casket containing the king's head.

768 643 The house is not burned after a death has occurred within, but it is still customary to take down the surrounding fence and to build a new one. The house in which death took place is then used as before. I was informed at the capital of Ngalangi, and by the king himself, that he must continue to use the house of former kings until the structure collapses. No repair work may be done; consequently the house was in a dilapidated condition. Some months after receiving this account at Elende I was in Moxico, several hundred miles away, and learned that at Cangamba the custom of severing the head of a king by suspension and friction prevails in the manner described above.

HUNTERS

224 766 While traveling in the district of Ganda, likewise in the Vasele country in the hinterland of Novó Redondo, one cannot fail to notice the presence of rock tombs (*ombilia* or *osonje*) which are mausoleums of hunters. These are invariably placed in commanding

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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kingdoms of the Ovimbundu, though more frequently perhaps it was made against the non-Umbundu peoples.[89]

The question of the influence of the trade provides interesting opportunities for comparison. The Ovimbundu were the southernmost of the peoples who in the nineteenth century participated in the trade between the Europeans of the West African coast and the peoples of the interior.[90] In some ways the Ovimbundu seem to have been less influenced by it than were some of the peoples further north. The Ovimbundu did not develop genuine patterns of urban life as in Dahomey or Benin.[91]

Three explanations can be offered for the relative failure of associational groups and urban society to develop. Umbundu crafts were much inferior to those found along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea; there was no indigenous weaving industry, for instance, and the goods which the caravans carried to the interior were all of European or American origin, cloths, guns, and rum.[92] For these goods the Ovimbundu were dependent on the Portuguese settled at the coast or in the Highland and this meant that the Ovimbundu were far from economic autonomy. Again the trade had a relatively short time span—the real boom period lasted only from 1886 to 1900, and earlier on in the 1840's when the beeswax, ivory, and slave trade was flourishing, the Ovimbundu had plenty of time for warfare.

It would, however, be a grave mistake to think that trade had only a marginal influence on Umbundu society. It has been suggested that the form of the double-descent system owes its origin to the necessity to isolate economic relations from other social fields. In the sphere of ritual, there are some remarkable copies of European practices—for instance the holding of a feast in honour of the ancestors at Christmas-time.[93] Many ritual concepts are related to the explanation of business

[89] For information on Umbundu warfare see Magyar, pp. 277–80 and Serpa Pinto, pp. 177–9.

[90] See Balandier, *Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire*, Paris, 1955, for a discussion of social change in other areas which had experienced a trade of a similar sort.

[91] For Dahomey see M. J. Herskovits, *Dahomey*, New York, 1938. For Benin see R. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom* (Ethnographic Survey of Africa), London, 1957.

[92] Childs, p. 206.

[93] Informants.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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does not give them any claim to financial assistance from the people, or control over natural resources, such as land rights. The only prerogative of this sort that the chief has is the right to the leg of an antelope killed in a hunt or a bull killed in a commemoration rite—and this is of symbolic rather than economic importance.

Nor, finally, does the post give the chiefs prestige and support.[11] Five successive chiefs of Gumba had been deposed by the post, and it is not uncommon for chiefs and government headmen to be beaten or otherwise punished (for instance by being made to work for a fortnight at the post) for their shortcomings. They have in fact just sufficient power to carry out the commands of the *chefe* and to do nothing more. They are not disliked by the local people for doing what the *chefe* tells them to do, but any attempt at dictatorial behaviour on their part will stir up opposition which may lead to their downfall.

The relations between white *chefe* and black chief vary according to individuals and neighbourhoods. Sometimes the *chefe* will allow the chief to be chosen according to tradition; at other times he will impose a candidate of his own. A *chefe* may hear any cases that are brought to the post, or he may delegate the power of hearing minor cases to the chiefs. Some *chefes* will regard the chiefs with hostility as being enemies of their own people; others will abstain under any circumstances from beating a chief, as they feel their power should be supported. Here I describe the situation as it was in Gumba and in Bimbe generally.

A visit to a chief's village in Gumba or elsewhere will give an opportunity of meeting those residents who hold the ministerial titles, of gazing under overshadowing trees at the enclosure in which are kept the skulls of former chiefs, and perhaps of seeing the chief and some of his cronies dance to a drum in commemoration of one of his predecessors. Ministers, skulls, dances, and drum are symbols of chiefly nostalgia rather than of political power. The ceremonies have little interest for the people in general, and many of them have been abandoned by the chief. Lusase's first wife had not, as custom demanded,

[11] For criticism of this policy by two Portuguese with administrative experience see Galvão and Selvagem, p. 213.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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become *inakulu* (queen) because she feared the unpleasant haunting by the spirits of former queens which is traditionally experienced by the holder of this office.[12] On one occasion Lusase himself offered to let me into the *akokolo* (the enclosure where the skulls of dead chiefs were kept) for the payment of five or ten escudos (1s. 3d. or 2s. 6d.) although the entry of anybody except the chief and possibly certain of his courtiers appears traditionally to have been forbidden under the penalty of death sent by the spirits. Even the surviving rites are confined to the chief's village; the first-fruits ceremony in which the whole chiefdom was involved disappeared a number of years ago. The association general in Umbundu country between the chiefs and paganism does not provide an added ritual sanction to the chief's power, but rather links him with what is felt to be a dying past, essentially unimportant, at the present day.

The chief may also have some of his time occupied with hearing cases. A good many minor disputes are solved by local adjudication, but there seems to be no specific division between cases that ought to come to the chief and those which can be arbitrated by somebody else. Elders from outside a chiefdom may be invited to adjudicate on a particular case. The old formality of legal procedure has largely disappeared, probably because all disputes at a local level can be carried to the post—hence any ruling by chief or elders is essentially dependent on its acceptance by the disputants.

Accusations of sorcery are rather different from other cases since the post does not believe them, although such an accusation is not in itself punishable. Sometimes suspected sorcerers are accused at the post of 'poisoning'.[13] Lusase told me that convicted sorcerers were fined a chicken, a goat and a pig. Gregorio, the chief of Menga, at first said, when I asked about this, that it was not possible to know who was a sorcerer. When, rather to his surprise, I mentioned the traditional basket test, he agreed and explained that people convicted by this test were sent as labourers to the post to satisfy whatever demand was being made for workers.

[12] Informants. See also Hastings, p. 49.

[13] Childs, p. 58.